Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GABORO 03132 101548Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CU-04 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05
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R 091308Z DEC 77
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1217
INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY DARESSALAAM
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION GENEVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 3132

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, SREF, BC
SUBJECT: SOWETO SECONDARY SCHOOL REFUGEES

REF: (A) GABORONE 2952, (B) GABORONE 3040

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: THE POOR SOWETO REFUGEE RESPONSE TO RECENT GHANAIAN OFFER OF 150 SCHOLARSHIPS HAS IRRITATED THE BATSWANA CONSIDERABLY AND, CONCEIVABLY, COULD PROVOKE THE GOB INTO TAKING MORE ENERGETIC MEASURES TO KEEP STUDENT REFUGEES MOVING OUT OF BOTSWANA AND TO PREVENT THEM FROM RETURNING. END SUMMARY.

2. CONCERNING 150 SECONDARY SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED BY GHANA TO SOWETO REFUGEE STUDENTS, AGRICULTURAL MINISTER MASISI COMPLAINED TO EMBOFF AT SOCIAL OCCASION DECEMBER 3 THAT ONLY TWELVE HAD ACCEPTED. MASISI THOUGHT THE MEAGER RESPONSE BY THE REFUGEES SHAMEFUL AND ONE WHICH MIGHT EVEN DISCOUR-
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PAGE 02 GABORO 03132 101548Z

AGE FURTHER REFUGEE ASSISTANCE TO BOTSWANA FROM OTHER AFRICAN STATES. MASISI SAID HE HAS LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR THOSE WHO OPTED OUT OF AN EDUCATION BECAUSE OF REPORTS FILTERING BACK FROM NIGERIA OF BAD FOOD OR BECAUSE THEY FELT, AS CITY SOPHISTICATES, THEY WOULD BE UNCOMFORTABLE IN NIGERIA OR GHANA.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

3. A SIMILAR BAD-TEMPERED COMPLAINT AGAINST THE SOWETO REFUGEES WAS MADE BY MINISTER OF PUBLIC INFORMATION KWELEGOBE, AS REPORTED BY SOUTH AFRICAN TV EVENING OF DECEMBER 6 (VIEWED BY EMBOFF).

4. UNHCR DEPUTY RESREP MCCALLIN TOLD US DECEMBER 7 THAT SCHOLARSHIP SITUATION WAS INDEED BAD (BUT, APPARENTLY, NOT QUITE AS GRIM AS PAINTED BY MASISI AND KWELEGOBE). DESPITE BEST ARMTWISTING EFFORTS BY UNHCR AND BOTSWANA REFUGEE COUNCIL, ONLY SEVENTEEN (NOT TWELVE) SOWETO STUDENTS SIGNED ON WITH GHANA GOVERNMENT RECRUITING TEAM. HE SAID THAT THE GREAT MASS OF THE SOME 600 SOWETO STUDENTS KEPT AWAY FROM INTERVIEWS BECAUSE OF BAD REPORTS OF CONDITIONS IN NIGERIA SPREAD BY THE SIX OR SEVEN ALIENATED STUDENTS WHO HAVE ALREADY RETURNED FROM THERE TO GABORONE (SEE REF A). ON THE OTHER HAND, GHANAIANS FOUND MUCH MORE INTEREST COMING FROM THE ZIMBABWEANS AND MANAGED TO SIGN ON THIRTY-FOUR ZIMBABWEAN STUDENTS BEFORE MOVING ON TO ZAMBIA NOVEMBER 30.

5. MCCALLIN NOTED THAT A NIGERIAN DELEGATION WAS EXPECTED IN GABORONE DECEMBER 8 TO RECRUIT MORE SOWETO STUDENTS. HE SAID HE COULD ONLY CROSS HIS FINGERS AND HOPE FOR THE BEST. THE NIGERIANS, HE SAID, ANTICIPATED ABSORBING OVER ONE THOUSAND REFUGEE STUDENTS BY THE END OF 1978 TO STUDY NOT ONLY THE HUMANITIES BUT TECHNOLOGY
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AND SCIENCE AS WELL.

6. COMMENT: AS ILLUSTRATED BY COMPLAINTS OF MASISI AND KWELEGOBE (SEE PARAS 2 AND 3), THE BACKING UP OF UNPOPULAR REFUGEE TRAFFIC IS MAJOR SOURCE OF IRRITATION HERE AND, CONCEIVABLY, COULD SPUR THE GOB TO TAKE MORE ENERGETIC MEASURES TO PASS SOWETO STUDENTS ONWARD AND TO KEEP THEM FROM RETURNING TO BOTSWANA. IN THIS REGARD, ANTHONY O'BRIEN, MANAGER OF ZAMBIAN AIRWAY OFFICE IN GABORONE, TELLS US THAT BOTSWANA HAS GIVEN AIRLINE COMPANIES NAMES OF STUDENTS WHO, PRESUMABLY, HAVE LEFT AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES AND WOULD NOT BE WELCOMED BACK INTO BOTSWANA. AIRLINES, HE SAID, WILL NOT FLY THESE STUDENTS TO GABORONE FOR FEAR THAT THEY WILL BE FORCED TO RETURN THEM FREE TO POINT OF ORIGIN. O'BRIEN'S REMARKS APPEAR TO CONTRADICT EARLIER STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TIBONE (REF A) THAT ALL STUDENTS WITH UNEXPIRED RETURN CLAUSE IN UNHCR TRAVEL DOCUMENT WOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO BOTSWANA.

7. IN SHORT, AS REFUGEE PRESSURE ON BOTSWANA'S LIMITED RESOURCES INCREASES AND WITH GENERAL ELECTIONS LOOMING

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

IN NEXT YEAR OR TWO, GOB IS UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE
TO ACT TO DECREASE THE UNPOPULAR STUDENT REFUGEE BURDEN.
END COMMENT.
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Message Attributes

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EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
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